

# Phlox subulata Creeping Phlox, Moss Pink<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Carol Lord<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The plant goes unnoticed during the year because it blends in with the grass and other surrounding parts of the landscape until flowers emerge in late winter and spring (Fig. 1). It is one of the signals that spring has arrived. Flower colors vary from red and lavender to pink and white, depending on the cultivar grown. Plants grow no more than about 6 inches tall, forming thick clumps and a good ground cover. The stiff leaves are narrow, growing to about an inch long and perhaps to 1/16 inch wide.



Figure 1. Creeping phlox

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Phlox subulata*

**Pronunciation:** flocks sub-yoo-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** creeping phlox, moss pink, moss phlox

**Family:** Polemoniaceae

**Plant type:** perennial; annual; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 3B through 10 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** Jun; Jul

**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun; Jul

**Planting month for zone 9:** Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug

**Planting month for zone 10:** Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** ground cover; cascading down a wall

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** .5 to 1 feet

**Spread:** depends upon supporting structure

**Plant habit:** spreading; prostrate (flat)

1. This document is FPS476, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Carol Lord, master gardener, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** not applicable

**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink; lavender; white; red

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown

**Fruit length:** unknown

**Fruit cover:** unknown

**Fruit color:** unknown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Creeping phlox is suitable for rock gardens, ground covers, or for planting on top of a garden wall. Flowers and foliage will cascade down a container side, making a nice complement to an upright plant in the container. It makes a nice stabilizer for a sloping landscape.

Phlox should be located in the full sun for best growth. The plants benefit from fertilization and from regular irrigation in dry weather during the growing season. Cut the foliage back after flowering to encourage denser growth and perhaps a weak second flower display.

Cultivars include: 'Crimson Beauty'—red flowers; 'Emerald Cushion'—pink flowers; 'Millstream'—white with a crimson eye; 'Millstream Daphne'—dark blue flowers; 'White Delight'—white flowers.

Propagation is by division of non-woody stems in early spring. Stem cuttings may be taken in summer or fall.

## Pests and Diseases

Mites cause the foliage to lose its green color, especially in dry weather. Heavy infestations form fine webbing.

Leaf spots attack the leaves. Remove infected leaves as you notice them.

Powdery mildew is the most common disease on this plant. The disease causes a white powdery growth on the leaves.

Crown rot may cause rotting near the soil line. A white fungal growth forms on the stem bases. Remove infected plants.